

Dig It

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Summary: Simba gets sent away to a camp for misguided cubs. Can Nala and Haiba break him out? Meanwhile, Zazu finds himself a new friend...

Chapter 1: Chapter 1: Deep Trouble

AN: Oh, I've made you suffer for a bit, haven't I? I bet you hate waiting for these stories to be put up. Still, at least I don't make you wait weeks on end for a new chapter. That's an upside, I guess. Well, here's a bit of a turning point in the series. I won't spoil it for you, though.

Dig It

Chapter One: Deep Trouble

"*What?* You can't do this to me! It isn't fair!" Simba yelled defiantly.

Yet again, Simba had gotten into an argument with his parents. It seemed that they were at each other's throats day in, day out. For some reason, there always seemed to be something that Simba was doing wrong. He just couldn't understand. He saved lives. He helped people. And he was getting grounded for it. It made no sense to him. No sense at all. Were his parents idiots or something? It sure seemed like it.

Mufasa and Sarabi just stared down at their son, unfazed by his shouting. "Simba, we think this is for the best. You have simply become far too disobedient. We can't take care of you any longer."

"You can't take care of me any longer?" Simba couldn't believe what he was hearing. "Are you insane? I mean, have you lost your *minds*? I'm your kid! You can't just throw me away like you don't want me!"

"Simba, it's not us that don't want you," Mufasa told his son. "We believe that *you* don't want *us*."

"*What?*" Simba's eyes were wide. "I don't want *you*? You're crazy! That doesn't even make sense! I haven't done anything! You... I..." Simba growled loudly, nearly tearing his fur out with frustration. "Oh, you make me so mad!"

"Oh, dear," Sarabi said, a worried look crossing her face. "He's turning violent, too. This could be more serious than we thought."

"Simba, it's time that you changed," Mufasa said. "We have to send you away – otherwise we might have to exile you."

"*Exile?*" said a voice from in corner of the den.

Nala got to her paws, walking over to Simba and his parents. "Right, I can't take this anymore. I have to step in." She looked up at Mufasa and Sarabi. "Look, you can't just exile Simba – and you can't send him away. He hasn't even done anything wrong. You probably wouldn't even be here if it wasn't for him."

"They're deluded," Sarabi said, shocked. "They think that they're our parents. Both of them are insane."

"We are *not* insane!" Nala argued. "If anyone is insane then it's *you*. Tell me: what exactly has Simba done to deserve this?"

"He doesn't listen," Mufasa explained. "He doesn't listen to a word we say. He has simply become far too much for us to handle. We cannot take care of him any longer. That's why we are sending him to a camp for misguided cubs."

"Please somebody say this is a dream," Simba moaned, staring up at the ceiling of the den. "I would *love* a dream right now. Dream? No?" His expression turned to one of total hopelessness. "Anybody?"

"I'm sorry, Simba," said Mufasa solemnly. "But it's the only option we have. You'll thank us in the end."

"I'll *hate* you in the end!" Simba spat angrily. "I might as well run away and never come back." He then turned away from his parents, storming out of the den.

He couldn't stand this anymore. Enough was enough. His parents had simply become far too overprotective and insane to look after him. From now on, he was taking care of himself. He could go and live in the jungle for ever and ever, with no one bothering him at all. He could make his own pride. A pride that hadn't gone totally crazy.

"Simba, wait," Nala called, catching up with him. "What do you think you're doing?" she asked.

"I'm going, that's what," he replied. "And you're coming with me. Haiba, too. If we're quick then they won't be able to catch up with us."

"Simba, you're talking crazy," Nala replied. "You can't just leave. What about your responsibilities as the future King?"

"I'm making my own pride," Simba told her. "*We're* making our own pride. And I can be the king of that. Come on. It can't be that hard."

"It's not that," Nala told him. "You can't just run away from home. Sure, your parents might be psychotically insane, but—"

"You're not helping, Nala," he interrupted. "You saw what they were like. They want to send me away to a camp for misguided cubs. They think I'm some kind of a troublemaker! I'm not! I mean... it just doesn't make any sense. Do you think they've been replaced by identical clones of my parents?"

"I don't think so," Nala said. "They're just... being protective of you, Simba," she tried to explain, in the gentlest way she could think of. "They're afraid that you're going to hurt yourself – or maybe even *die*. It's not because they don't love you – or anything else like that."

Simba sighed, sitting down on the ground glumly. "But I just don't get it," he said confusedly. "First they think I'm going to kill myself. Then they fire Zazu. And now they want to send me away for ever!"

"I don't think they want to send you away for *that* long, Simba," Nala said, rolling her eyes.

"I can't believe you're siding with them," Simba said in outrage. "You're supposed to be on my side!"

"I just don't want you to do something that you'll regret," she replied. "Besides, I can always come and visit you."

Simba shook his head, staring down at the ground. "You've lost your mind. Literally. I think your brain has actually fallen out. I'm not misguided! I'm heroic! Cute! Charming! Qualities that many other cubs would give their own paws for! Maybe I can get my parents sent away to a camp for misguided adults. Although I doubt it would change much."

"Oh, you wouldn't find one of them," said Haiba, joining the two cubs by their side. "Adults are too 'responsible' – when most of them are actually murderous psychopaths. So, what's up, then? I've just been on an errand for Zazu. He's now turned into a homeless, depressed wreck, living off of bananas."

"Looks like we're not the only sad ones around here," Nala said, shooting a sympathetic glance over at Simba. "Simba's parents want to send him away to a camp for misguided cubs."

Haiba raised an eyebrow. "Seriously?" he exclaimed in surprise. "What's he done wrong? It's not like he's burned down the kingdom or anything like that. He's *saved* it about a hundred times!"

"Two hundred and seventy-three," Simba said. "I've counted."

"You see? That's a heck of a lot of hero work," said Haiba. "I don't see how that makes him misguided. What, do they think you're some kind of a future murderer or something?"

"What happens at a camp for misguided cubs?" Nala asked him.

"Oh, you don't want to know about places like that," Haiba responded. "They're dark, dirty, *scary* places. Nobody ever goes in, and nobody ever comes out. They make you do horrible, *horrible* things. And if you don't listen then they turn you into a tree."

"A *tree*?" Simba yelled, eyes widening. "That's gotta be the stupidest thing I've ever heard in my life! You can't be serious."

"Okay, so maybe I was joking about the tree part," Haiba admitted, "but the rest of it is all true. Believe me. You don't want to get sent to one of those camps. I would suggest that you run away and start your own pride in the jungle. I mean, look at Tiny Tojo and his girlfriend. They're living like gods."

"That was my original idea," Simba told him. "But then Nala thought it would be a good idea for me to go."

"I did not!" Nala argued. "I just said that your parents don't hate you."

"Same thing," Simba mumbled, before getting to his paws. "All I know is that I am not going to one of those camps. They'd have to knock me out and drag me there."

Thwack!

***Chapter 2*: Chapter 2: A Gift from the Sky**

Chapter Two: A Gift from the Sky

"Misery, misery, misery," Zazu moaned to himself. "That's what I've chosen."

Zazu lay miserably up against a dead tree in the middle of the Outlands, separated from the kingdom of the Pride Lands. He just couldn't face staying there anymore. It just wasn't the same.

Zazu had been fired. For not being able to keep his big beak shut. He had insulted the King, and now he was paying the price for it. He was no longer allowed to be the King's royal advisor. That job was all that he ever cared about – and it was also the only thing that he truly cherished and loved.

It gave him a sense of accomplishment. Like he had actually made something of his life. Surely he had? Working for a famous king had to be worth something, did it not? He would have made his father proud.

Or maybe his father wasn't proud at all. Zazu had inadvertently killed his own father, all because of an evil, horrific being known as Death. Zazu shuddered at just the mention of his name. Death was all that was evil in the universe. If something bad happened, then it was because of him.

But Death was gone now – and that pleased Zazu, to some extent. The memories of his father's untimely death still hurt him on the inside, but at least now Death had finally been put to rest.

Bad things still happened, of course – like Zazu losing his job. He just couldn't understand where the King was coming from. Recently, he seemed to have taken on the idea that his son was a worthless, good-for-nothing troublemaker. And that just wasn't true.

Zazu had known Simba for quite some time – having even been present at his birth – and he knew that Simba was not a troublemaker. He did not cause trouble. At least, not on purpose. There was usually a good, decent reason for it.

Granted, the cub always was slightly... eager and adventurous. He liked to get a thrill out of things. Zazu remembered Simba's own father being very much the same – but not nearly on the same scale as Simba was. Mufasa seemed to quieten down after he found himself a girlfriend. Sarabi never was one for adventure.

And then Simba met Nala. The two of them were very alike. They both had an unnatural thirst. A crave for getting themselves into dangerous situations that they just couldn't seem to get rid of. Every day it seemed the two were finding new ways to almost get themselves killed.

But the funny thing was: they never really seemed to put anyone else in harm's way. If someone was going to get hurt, then it would be either one of them. No one else. Oddly enough, they seemed to have a strange sense of responsibility for what they were doing. If they jumped off the edge of the cliff, then they were more than prepared to face the risks.

Zazu had to admit that the two cubs had grown on him. At first they were rather meddlesome, but he had come to like them. He certainly liked them a lot more than the King right now. Simba and Nala were the closest to actually becoming his friends.

He was the only one who had ever gotten hurt as a result of their early misadventures. Once the two cubs had thought that they'd actually murdered him – but then he'd just been pretending to be dead, so he could get his own back on them. Sweet, sweet revenge. He had to admit that was pretty enjoyable. One of the few pleasures in his rather tedious job.

So, did Zazu enjoy his job? Did he actually enjoy painstakingly monitoring each and every single thing that went on in the Pride Lands? Did he actually take pleasure from this?

The answer?

No.

He did not enjoy it at all. It was boring. It was tedious. He had even lost a fair few feathers because of it. It was one of the worst jobs in the world.

Then why was he so adamant to keep it? It was all that he knew. Ever since his father had died, all Zazu had was the job. That was all he wanted it for. Accomplishment. To remind himself that he wasn't worthless, pathetic or pointless. He hated his job, but he needed it. He needed it badly.

He lied a lot of the time. Said that he was 'respected' and 'important'. Really, he wasn't. If someone were to ask an

animal in the Pride Lands what they thought of Zazu, then the reply would go something like this.

"Who's Zazu?"

Hardly anyone even remembered him. They saw him flying around a heck of a lot, but he just looked completely insane to them. And that just made him feel even more and more depressed.

He had hit such a low right now, that he was living off of bananas in the middle of the Outlands. He was one sad, sad... *sad* hornbill. The only thing that could make Zazu's life even worse was if he were eaten by a snake.

"Miserable," Zazu frowned. "Miserable, miserable, miserable. I wish I was dead. No, I wish the *King* was dead. As if having the most mundane job in the world wasn't enough, now I have to deal with having my employment terminated. I have no home. No life. Nothing at all. I have to talk to myself just to pass the time."

He felt like bursting into tears there and then. It felt as if he were nothing. It was as if he didn't even exist. He was nothing but a lonely hornbill, living off of bananas in the middle of the Outlands.

The phrase 'down in the dumps' had never been truer.

Zazu plucked a banana skin from the top of his head, throwing it into the air. It landed on a pile of identical banana skins a few feet away from him. "I have no life," he said to himself, staring down sadly at the ground. "Where do I go from here? What is my destiny in life?"

He then looked up at the sky. "Great Kings of the Past, if you really do exist, then please give me a sign that everything is going to become much better in the future. Any sign at all. *Please!*"

Suddenly, Zazu heard a very strange noise coming from the sky. Glancing around, he saw something hurtling right towards the ground.

Or rather, hurtling towards the exact spot where he was sitting.

"I'm dead."

The something landed right in front of him, and Zazu found himself staring down at one of the most confusing sights he had ever seen in his life.

A female hornbill. She looked much like Zazu did, although a lot more slender and feminine in appearance.

She was unconscious. Clearly the fall from right out of the sky had done that. Slowly, her eyes flickered open, and the sight of Zazu made her smile.

"Ah... it's an angel..." she said, before closing her eyes, unconscious once more.

Zazu looked absolutely stunned. "I thought that was what I was supposed to say."

AN: Dun dun dun, as the dramatic music goes. Looks like the Great Kings of the Past have given Zazu a gift. Either that or a very good accident. Who is this female hornbill? Where will Simba get sent to? Are his parents completely insane? I think you already know the answer to that last one.

Chapter 3: Chapter 3: Camp Kazi

AN: Brace yourselves, people. You are going to meet one of the best characters yet. This character has actually killed people out of sheer funniness. So, just keep that in mind, because what you about to read could be the weirdest thing you will ever... *ever* see.

Emily642: You don't know who Death is? I must say I'm surprised. Go and read *Darkness Falls*. It's the Series Three finale. Everything is explained there.

DarkDevil002: You just keep theories like that to yourself, Mr I-Know-Everything-About-Nothing! Just kidding. You're on the right track, though. I just love it when people share their ideas about these stories. Some of you don't know just how close you are...

Chapter Three: Camp Kazi

"I can't believe I'm actually watching this," Nala said, rooted to the spot, looking extremely stunned. "Like, this must be a dream or something."

Nala and Haiba were stood watching as Mufasa dragged Simba away, biting him by the scruff of the neck. He had actually rendered his own son unconscious. Nala couldn't believe what she was seeing. It was all so surreal...

"Do something, Haiba!" Nala yelled, gesturing to Simba with a paw.

"Me? What am I supposed to do?" Haiba replied. "The King just knocked his own son out, and I'm gonna go and confront him? I'd hate to see what he does to complete strangers!"

"Oh..." Nala growled angrily, batting Haiba on the side with her paw repeatedly. "You're useless! Useless, useless, useless!"

"Hey, hey, hey!" Haiba backed away from her. "Don't go hollering at me! I'm not the one dragging Simba away!"

"But... but this is stupid!" Nala sputtered. "I can't believe Simba's dad would do that. It's just not right."

"I've noticed *you're* not doing anything about it," said Haiba, raising an eyebrow at Nala. "And he's your boyfriend. Not putting up much of a fight, are you?"

"Hey, I think Simba's parents are mad enough with me already," Nala replied. "They'd probably kick me out of the kingdom for brainwashing him or something. There is one thing I *will* do, though."

"What? Stand there and watch?" said Haiba. "Should I fetch us a snack?" he asked sarcastically.

"We've got to find out where they're taking him," Nala said. "See if we can get inside that place, and try to somehow get Simba *out*."

"How do we do that?" Haiba asked.

Nala frowned, watching as Simba was dragged off into the distance by his father. She felt so sorry for him. "I don't know. But we're gonna find out. His parents have lost their minds. If I didn't know any better, then I would say they weren't his parents at all."

"Not his parents?" Haiba snickered. "That would be just stupid. What, do you think they're his identical relatives who want a son of their own? Pretty farfetched, Nala."

"Exactly." She sighed sadly, before heading in the direction of Pride Rock. "Come on, Haiba. We'd better go back inside. There's nothing we can do for Simba right now."

"I take it we're initiating Strategy 22A," Haiba presumed. "You know – when we pretend like we don't care about anything or anyone."

"We don't run on strategies, Haiba," Nala responded. "You know us – we just improvise all the time. It's a lot easier that way."

"A little planning goes a long way," Haiba told her. "My mother told me that. She also told me that a meerkat saved is a meerkat earned. Don't eat wildebeest before going to sleep—"

"Haiba, I am desperately trying to cling on to my sanity without you blabbing on and on and on," Nala interrupted, turning to face him with a sweet smile on her face. "So, please, keep that big mouth shut."

"But—"

Nala clamped a paw over his mouth. "*Shut*," she ordered.

Finally, Haiba said nothing.

"Thank you. Now, first thing we're going to do is get a good night's sleep. Then tomorrow morning we can find out where this camp for misguided cubs is. Surely it can't be *that* hard to find."

Simba was miles and miles and miles away. That was what his father had said to him.

"*Don't bother trying to run away, Simba*," he had said. "*You are likely to die of thirst or starvation before you get even halfway to the Pride Lands.*"

Simba was furious with his father. He had knocked him out and dragged him all the way to the middle of nowhere. But strangely enough, he actually recognised the area that his father had left him in.

This was close to where that forest place was, Simba realised, remembering one of his previous adventures in which he had temporarily switched places with a psychotic frog. *I can tell by all of the...*

Simba took a few steps forward across the dusty ground, arriving at the edge of a hole dug in the ground. It was five foot wide and five foot in diameter. "I can tell by all of the holes," he finished aloud.

Simba turned around, and could see many, many, many identical holes in the ground. *There weren't as many holes out here last time*, he realised. *Just what the heck is going on around here?*

Turning around, Simba couldn't see his father. He had left him long ago, simply telling him to keep going forward and he would eventually reach the camp. *What a kind and caring dad I have*, he thought sarcastically. *Why, one day I'd like to take out my claws and slash him right in the butt!*

Simba stared into the distance, and then up at the sun. Its powerful rays were beating down on him, causing him to feel drowsy and exhausted. He'd had enough of that yesterday when he'd been kidnapped by a mermaid and hypnotised into becoming her mindless little boyfriend.

That was when a sudden thought struck him. "I could run away," he stated to no one in particular, just staring at the bright blue sky. *I could run away and never ever come back. I could live in the jungle, eat a whole load of bugs, grow up, and then fight my dad for future rule of the kingdom.*

He pushed such a thought out of his mind. *Don't be ridiculous, Simba*, he told himself. *Like that would ever happen. Besides, I couldn't spend years living on my own. It'd be too... lonely. I knew I should have run away with Nala and Haiba when I had the chance.*

Simba slunk to the ground, sighing. "What am I gonna do?" he asked, deliberating on whether to run away or go to this camp. Either way, he was pretty much guaranteed a miserable life.

"Oh..." Simba looked left and right, before climbing to his paws, heading in the direction his father had told him to go. "All right. I'll go to this stupid camp. Maybe I can find out what the big deal with all these holes is while I'm at it."

He kept walking across the hard land, kicking up small clouds of dirt with his paws. "Holes, holes, holes," Simba muttered as he strode along. "So many of them. But what do they all mean?"

Simba didn't know how long he had to stay at the camp for. His parents hadn't really filled him in on things like that – considering they'd knocked him out to get him here in the first place. He hoped that maybe things would become a little bit clearer once he arrived at the camp.

"Well..." Simba looked left and right. "At least I'm not going to be knocked out for a while—"

Thwack!

Simba felt a blow to the back of his head, stumbled forward with a doopey smile on his face, and then collapsed to the ground, unconscious.

"If I had a wildebeest for every time I've been knocked out..." Simba muttered to himself, feeling the back of his head. He could feel a throbbing bump there. "Ow. Ow, ow, ow, ow, ow."

He looked around, and found himself surrounded by darkness. He couldn't see a thing. Nothing at all. "Oh, you're in big trouble now, Simba," he said, his auburn eyes flickering left and right. "*Big*, big trouble."

He walked forwards, only for his face to collide with a wall of stone. "Oh, for crying out loud!" he yelled, rubbing his aching nose. "Is it 'Let's Hurt Simba Day' or something like that? What did I do to deserve this?"

A thick rectangle of light suddenly shone into the darkened area, and Simba soon realised that he was in a cave of some sort.

Someone had removed a large rock from outside the cave, allowing light to shine in. "Who goes there?" Simba asked, feeling a lump in his throat. He'd probably been captured by the Mad Murderer, or some psychopath with a similar name to that.

Simba was suddenly grabbed by the throat, and wrenched out of the cave so fast that it took him a few moments to realise that he was outside.

"*Your new camp counsellor, that's who!*" an angry, snarling voice replied.

Simba gulped at the sight of the lion that had his claws around his neck. "Um... hello. My name is Simba and—"

"I know what your name is!" the angry lion cut him off, staring at him with hard, menacing brown eyes. "Now, you'd better listen, and you'd better listen good, 'cause I don't like troublemakers in my camp who don't listen!"

Oh, please don't let him be in charge of this place, Simba thought worriedly, getting a feeling that the foreseeable future was going to be filled with a lot of pain, suffering and unbearable torment. "Uh... I'm not a troublemaker."

"*Don't talk back to me!*" the lion roared, causing Simba to tremble with fear. "My name is Maana, and you will only speak when spoken to. Is that clear?"

Simba frowned. "Yes, sir."

"*I said speak when spoken to!*" Maana yelled. "Now, I'm going to make one thing clear: you will obey all orders given to me, or you will suffer a fate worse than death. Am I getting through to you?"

"Extremely."

"*Good!*" Maana dropped Simba to the dusty ground. "Now, Simba, do you know why you have been sent here?"

"Actually, I don't—"

"You have been sent here because you are an evil, heartless, messed up freak of a cub," Maana interrupted. "And you have been sent to Camp Kazi to clean up your act – or you will be exiled from that pretty little kingdom that you love so much."

Whatever you say, Simba thought, rubbing his burning throat with a paw. *Maybe I should have taken my chances in the desert...*

Maana pulled Simba roughly to his paws. "Now, the first thing we do to all inmates at Camp Kazi is make them say the Oath of Evil, Good-for-nothing Cubs!"

Simba's ears were ringing. This guy was shouting all the time! Would he ever just turn the volume down a bit? "What's the Oath of Evil, Good-for-nothing Cubs?"

"Just say this: 'I am a worthless, good-for-nothing cub, who will never amount to anything in life.' Say it *now!*" Maana ordered.

Simba hesitated for a moment, but decided to do as Maana said. "I am a worthless, good-for-nothing cub, who will never amount to anything in life."

"*Excellent!*" Maana shouted, causing Simba to cover his ears. "Now, come with me, and I will show you what you are going to be doing for the next eighteen months!"

Maana turned around and walked off, expecting Simba to follow.

Eighteen months? Simba thought as he followed Maana. *Oh, man...*

Chapter 4: Chapter 4: The Wild Hornbill

Chapter Four: The Wild Hornbill

Zazu had seen a fair few incredible things in his life, but this had to be the biggest shock of them all. More shocking than being fired from the job that he cherished and despised at the same time. Out of all the strange and surprising things he'd seen in his life, this was the one thing that he had never expected.

To see a female hornbill up close.

Zazu had never seen a female hornbill before. The only one he even really knew of was his mother – and she had died when he was only six months old. He couldn't recall any sort of memory of her, so this really was the first time he had seen the opposite sex of his kind. He had to admit that it was rather fascinating to see.

"Oh, great heavens!" he exclaimed, slowly climbing to his feet, staring at the female hornbill with utter amazement. "This is... this can't be happening. It defies logic. Reason. Life itself! Hornbills don't just go crashing into the Outlands all the time! I must be dreaming. Either that or a lucid hallucination brought on by my harrowing unemployment."

He lightly poked the unconscious hornbill with a feather. She made a little noise in her sleep, causing Zazu to gasp. "She's real!" he yelled in surprise, pressing his back up against the tree that was behind him. "She's actually real! And unconscious, also – but we'll deal with the problems one step at a time."

He smiled with sympathy at the unconscious creature. *Poor thing*, he thought. *She must have been through a lot. I can tell. Seen far too many sad faces for my own good. I wonder how she ended up all the way out here?*

Zazu stared at the female hornbill, wondering if he should wake her up or not. Would she mind? For all he knew, she could be a savage, wild creature, having been brought up to cannibalise all the hornbills she met.

Or maybe he was just being silly.

"It makes me wonder why such an... alluring hornbill like you would come to a grungy, disgusting place such as this. I'm sure there are thousands of better locations you can visit. Why choose me? All I've got is banana skins." He glanced at the pile of banana peels a few feet away from him. "That reminds me. What on earth am I going to give you to eat? You must be hungry. Everyone gets hungry. Even unconscious hornbills."

He chuckled nervously. "Oh, this is pointless!" he cried, walking in circles around the unconscious hornbill. "I'm useless at taking care of even *unconscious* creatures! I should be ashamed! Absolutely *ashamed* of myself!" He collapsed to his back, a miserable frown on his back. "Oh, if my father could see me now..."

Sighing, Zazu realised that his life was pretty much over and done with. He'd end up here for the rest of his days, eating banana after banana after banana, wasting away all of his potential and the great future he could have secured for himself. Five years old and nowhere to go but down.

"Life truly, truly, truly... *sucks*! Sorry for using such an uncivilised word, but it's true! Life sucks! Every bit of it! Every waking moment! From dusk till dawn! From January to December! From decade to century! It all..." He pointed up at the sky with a wing. "*Sucks*! And to make matters worse, now I've got a female who will probably get mad at me for not making her feel like a queen."

The female hornbill sighed, and Zazu watched with horror as her eyes flickered open. She was awake. *Oh, I'm dead*, he thought worriedly. *Dead, dead, dead, dead, dead. She's going to kill me. She's going to kill me. It is all over. She is going to kill me.*

Zazu decided to try and make at least some sort of impression on the female, by walking over to her side and smiling warmly down at her. "Greetings. Are you hurt, miss?"

"Hurt?" The female hornbill raised her eyebrows, and looked herself over. "I hope not." She suddenly grabbed Zazu by the chest, staring into his eyes. "Do I look hurt to you? My mother always warned me to get a second opinion from people, but sometimes I'm not so sure, 'cause some people can be very dangerous and..."

She cleared her throat, and let go of Zazu, smiling. "Sorry. Got a little carried away for a second there. I'm always doing that. Ridiculous little me!"

Zazu just stared at her with wide eyes. He was lost for words. She was speaking at a million miles a minute. "And you are...?" he finally said.

She giggled. "Oh. Sorry. I'm always doing that, too. Never say who I am. Stupid me. Like, *duh!*" She went cross-eyed, pretending to look dumb. "My name is Pori. It means 'wild'. You know, like one of those crazy – but cool – languages that no one really understands. So, what's your name? Do you come here often? What does a girl do for fun around here? And why is it so dark? Gee, you'd think the sun could at least shine a *little* bit around here for once, and—"

She gasped, jumping to her feet and running over to the pile of banana skins on the ground. "Are those bananas?" she exclaimed with glee, nearly bursting with excitement. "I *love* bananas! Boy, this is a turn for the better!"

She started rifling through the banana peels. "Hmm. Seems you only got the skins. Boy, you sure eat a lot, don't you? But hey." She put one on top of her head, turning to Zazu. "They sure make a great hat. What do you think? How do I look?"

Zazu's beak had dropped to the ground. "... Uh..." He blinked a few times, completely stunned by how fast Pori was. She was so bouncy and energetic. He'd never seen anyone like it. Simba and Nala had nothing on her.

He finally spoke. "Sorry. Where are my manners? My name is Zazu. I am – *was* – the King's royal advisor, but—"

"King?" Pori looked around excitedly. "There's a *king* of this place? I don't believe it! This is fantastic! I thought I'd just find a bunch of dead trees and rocks – which there are plenty around here – but there's actually a royal family! Oh, I can't *wait* to take a look around! You can show me everything! *Everything!* The world is my orange, as a wise turtle said to me once."

"Are you sure you should be up and about so fast?" Zazu asked. "You took a particularly nasty fall on your way in."

"Fall?" Pori looked upwards. "As in, from the sky? Oh, Zubat – or whatever your name is – I don't fall anywhere. I am the expert at flying. Just watch." She spread her wings. "Whee!" She crashed right into a dead tree, and ended up sliding to the ground. "Hey!" she cried angrily. "Who put the tree here? Why, you little..."

She started attacking the tree angrily, gnawing at one of its branches with her beak.

This is insane, Zazu thought as he watched Pori. How can one tiny hornbill have so much energy inside of her? It's unheard of. "Um, excuse me, miss, but I would suggest that you refrain from attacking the deceased wildlife."

Pori smiled sweetly at Zazu, fluttering down to the ground. "Oh, Zurg—"

"Zazu."

"That's what I said. You see, Zack, I know I may look like I've lost my mind, but trust me. I am a perfectly intelligent hornbill. I even know all the words to that song about love and purity and truth. You know, that one where they all die in the end. I *love* that!"

"Uh, miss—"

"Call me Pori, Zachariah," she interrupted, putting a wing around his shoulder. "I'll use your name, and you use mine. How about that? Does that work for you? It has to, otherwise it won't work – and then I just might have to break both your legs."

Zazu really didn't know what to say. "Uh—"

"Just kidding!" Pori let out a laugh. "Oh, we are going to be the *best* of friends, Zero!"

Zazu chuckled nervously. "Yeah," he said. "Whatever you say..."

AN: Oh, God. Words cannot describe how much I love Pori. She's gotta be one of the best yet. Certainly the quirkiest, that's for sure. I'm sure Zazu is going to share many happy stories with her.

Chapter 5: Chapter 5: One Hole Each Day

AN: Like a flying elephant, this story just keeps getting weirder and weirder. I'm very happy that you like the insanity that is the new character, Pori. So weird that you just love her, huh?

kora22: Of course it's a *Holes* parody. Love the book and the movie. That's my problem. If I love something, then I just go and mess it all up in one of my stories. I torture myself too much.

StonedMonkey1: Yes, I did mean the Pokémon, Zubat. Gotta catch 'em all!

Chapter Five: One Hole Each Day

Simba had never felt so twitchy in his whole life. There was no doubt in his mind the next eighteen months – and he couldn't believe he had to spend *that* long here – were sure to be filled with nothing but the most painful forms of torture. He wouldn't be surprised if all of his legs dropped off by the end of his time – or sentence – at Camp Kazi.

His camp counsellor – Maana – had brought Simba all the way to the middle of a desolate field. All Simba could see was the hard dirt on the ground – plus the occasional hole that had been dug out.

There were no clouds in the sky, leaving him totally vulnerable to the sun. He couldn't stand the heat. It was hot enough in the Pride Lands when there *were* clouds; never mind no clouds at all!

"Just what am I supposed to be doing here?" Simba asked, looking around the deserted land. He didn't understand how this was supposed to turn him away from being an 'evil, good-for-nothing cub'.

Maana growled, his eyes burning into Simba's. "Don't talk back to me, kid."

"But you didn't say anything—"

"*Enough!*" Maana roared at such a volume that the tuft on Simba's head was blown right back.

Simba then said nothing. He was simply too stunned by the angry, unpredictable personality of this lion. Maana was insanity at its best.

"Thank you," Maana said. What may have been a flicker of a smile formed on his face. "Now, you see this dirt?"

Simba looked down at the ground, and then nodded. He didn't bother saying anything; it would only have made things even worse than they already were.

Maana pointed to the hard dirt with a claw. "This is going to be your best friend for the next eighteen months. You are to dig one hole each day. Five foot deep, five foot in diameter. And if you don't... Well..."

Maana grabbed Simba by the scruff of the neck, roughly shoving his head over a nearby hole. "Then you'll join all of the other cubs who came here."

Simba's eyes widened in horror. There were several skeletons – *cub* skeletons – piled up in the hole. "You mean...?" Simba gulped in fear. "No one's been released from the camp?"

Maana chuckled, causing Simba's stomach to churn with terror. "No. Of course not. No one ever leaves Camp Kazi alive – unless they listen, of course. It's just unfortunate that all evil, good-for-nothing cubs have a problem with that."

"So I'm the only one here?"

Simba didn't like this. He was all on his own, with the craziest lion this side of the world as a camp counsellor. He'd give anything just to escape to somewhere far, far away right now. He couldn't spend a whole eighteen months of his life just digging holes! It was such a waste of time!

"Yeah." Maana nodded. "You're the only one here. Lucky you. Now, if you find anything interesting, you are to report it to me. If I like what you find, then you'll get the rest of the day off."

Simba couldn't help it. He became curious. "What am I supposed to be looking for?"

"You're not looking for anything," was his reply. "You take a bad cub, make him dig holes out all day in the hot sun, and it turns him into a good cub. That's our philosophy here at Camp Kazi." He glanced at the hard ground. "Start digging."

Simba stared downwards. That ground was going to be pretty tough to penetrate – even with the assistance of his sharp claws. And he was supposed to dig a hole that was five foot wide and five foot deep? He wasn't going to have *paws* by the time the *first* hole was dug!

Sighing, Simba dug one of his claws into the ground. It got stuck. He wriggled it out, and ended up with a few pieces of dirt getting caught in his mouth.

He coughed and spluttered on the ground, choking at the awful, filthy taste in his mouth. He spat several times onto the dirt, disgusted.

Watching, Maana just smiled. "One down, ten million to go."

Nala didn't know what to do. Usually, she was pretty good at deduction. Working things out. Breaking everything down – one step at a time – and then formulating some kind of plan. Sure, most of the time she had to do this within five seconds, but it worked. *Barely* – but it still worked, nonetheless.

But this time, she had no information to go on. All she knew was that Simba had been dragged off to a camp for misguided cubs. She had no idea where such a place could be – and Haiba's knowledge was less than trustworthy. He just knew how horrible places like that could be; nothing about where they were located.

She lay on her stomach, staring out over the edge of Pride Rock, her head resting on her paws. *One day me and Simba will be in charge of all this*, she thought to herself. *Wow...*

That still surprised her. Queen Nala. She liked the sound of that. Certainly better than Princess Nala. That just made her sound like a whiny, cowardly cub that just ended up getting kidnapped all the time.

Okay, so she had been kidnapped a few times – but most of the time she got out of it alive. She could be just as heroic as Simba. Who was there to save him when he had been taken by a mermaid? She had. If it wasn't for her, then he would have had all of the water drained from his body.

But hey – one day she would have a whole kingdom of her own. And a very lovely mate to share it with. She couldn't envision a happier future for herself.

That is, if Simba ever got back from misguided cub camp – wherever that was. She knew that she just couldn't leave him to fester out there. Haiba had made those places sound like a living hell. He could die within a week of being there!

Sighing, Nala looked up at the bright blue sky. "What do I do? What do I do? What do I do?" she whispered to herself. She was totally stumped. "If I were Simba, then what camp for misguided cubs would I go to?"

Of course, she didn't know the answer. Simba didn't even *belong* in one of those camps in the first place. It was only because his parents were utterly incompetent that he had ended up there. They thought he was a troublemaker – and that wasn't true in the slightest. He was kind. He was caring. He had the cutest tuft in the kingdom. How could you look at an adorable little thing like that and say that he needed to be sent away for ever and ever?

"Nala?" called a voice from behind her. "Honey, you're looking pretty sad. What's wrong?"

Nala looked behind to see her mother approaching. "Oh." She stared down at the ground. "It's nothing, Mom. Did you hear about Simba?"

Sarafina nodded. "Yeah. Once I saw you sulking up here I presumed it would have something to do with that."

"It makes no sense, Mom," Nala complained. "Simba hasn't even done anything, and now I'm never going to see him ever again."

"Eighteen months," Sarafina corrected her.

Nala's ears perked up. "Huh?"

"Eighteen months," she repeated. "Simba's been sent away for eighteen months."

"Um... how did you know that?" Nala asked.

"I *am* best friends with Simba's mother, Nala," replied Sarafina. "I think I can get more than my fair share of secrets out of her. Either that or break her with psychological torture."

"Wait a second..." Nala slowly came to a realisation. "So does that mean that you know where this camp for misguided cubs is?"

Sarafina nodded at her daughter. "Uh-huh. It's called Camp Kazi, and it's about a few miles west of the Pride Lands."

"Miles?" Nala's eyes widened. "Oh, great. So now I've gotta walk all day and then break Simba out of—" She gasped, covering her mouth with a paw. "Pretend I didn't say that."

"My mouth is sealed," Sarafina assured her cub. "I can't really blame you for wanting to try and get Simba out. I have noticed quite a few changes in Sarabi lately. Almost as if she's a completely different person. Either that or she lost her mind and went crazy. Being the queen of an enormous kingdom can stress you out like that. Still, I'm sure you'll do a much better job when you're in charge of things."

Nala smiled. "Thanks, Mom."

"Oh, and don't tell anyone that I told you about where they're keeping Simba," Sarafina said as she walked away. "Otherwise we'll *both* be thrown out of the pride. Okay?"

Nala nodded. "Okay."

"Good."

Once her mother was gone, Nala quickly headed for the den. "Haiba, where are you? We've got a job to do."

Chapter 6: Chapter 6: Pori's Purpose

Chapter Six: Pori's Purpose

Zazu didn't think that he'd ever had a more frantic day than this one. This new hornbill had him running around in circles. He couldn't think straight with her around. Everything was just going way too fast for him. It seemed like Pori wanted to do everything all at once. There was no stopping her!

"Um, excuse me, Pori," Zazu said, watching as she was preoccupied with comparing the length of two sticks on the ground. "I feel morally obliged to ask. Are you hungry at all?"

"Hungry?" Pori turned around swiftly, grabbing Zazu by the chest. "Oh, Zane, that would be just perfect! How about some wild wildebeest topped with a delightful sauce made out of its own blood? That would satisfy me, all right."

Zazu blinked a couple of times. "It's Zazu," he corrected her. "And I'm afraid that I don't have food... *quite* as psychotic as you're asking, but I'm sure I could ruffle up something most delicious."

"Yeah, you do that, Zebra," Pori muttered, returning to the two sticks on the ground. "I'm trying to decide on which stick is better to whack that annoying tree over there with."

Zazu narrowed his eyes at Pori. "I'm not sure if you know of this, but those sticks are the same length," he pointed out.

Pori's eyes widened. "Really? Well, that's just baffled me, Zarek. You must have really good eyesight to spot that. I didn't even realise those two sticks were exactly the same. I thought they just looked identical."

Zazu slapped a wing to his face. "That means the same thing," he told her. "Clearly you haven't been educated very well."

"Oh, I know enough," Pori assured him with a wave of her wing. "I was taught at the Cuckoo Bird School for Insane Hornbills. I was the best of the bunch. I got an A in my insanity test, I'll have you know."

"I can hardly say I'm surprised," Zazu muttered.

"I know, right!" Pori exclaimed happily. "Oh, I just *knew* we'd get on, Zeal! We're going to have so much fun together!"

"Um, if you don't mind me asking, what exactly is the purpose of your visit here?" Zazu enquired.

"Well, to see this amazing place, of course!" Pori answered. "First I was just flying around, you know, looking, looking, looking – when suddenly..." She pointed at Zazu. "I saw *you*, Zebedee. I thought that was very odd. I mean, it's not normal that you see someone who looks exactly like you outside of your own home."

"You don't leave your nest very much, do you?" Zazu presumed, rather amazed by the lack of knowledge this female possessed. She clearly had a lot to learn – but who better to teach her than him?

"Nope. This is my first time," Pori told him. "It's so exciting! I've been travelling all over the place! I've seen so many things! I've seen the jungle! I've seen the desert! And now I'm at this place! What do you call it?"

Zazu cleared his throat. "They refer to it as the Outlands."

"Ooh, the Outlands!" Pori exclaimed. "Spooky name! It's like a bunch of land... that's *out*! I've never heard of such a great name before!"

"Then clearly you haven't heard of the Pride Lands," said Zazu. "It's far more entertaining and much less filthy than this dismal area."

"Pride Lands?" Pori laughed. "Oh, that's a stupid name! But then again, never judge a pride by its name. That's what I always say."

"You say a lot of things, don't you?"

"So, could you show me this magical Pride Lands place, Zenox?" Pori asked. "It'd really mean a lot to me."

Zazu sighed. "If you insist. Just follow me. As long as your flying isn't too worse for wear."

"I told you before, Zeke – my flying is *perfect*!"

Simba dug his claws into ground, wincing as they ached with pain. He wasn't cut out for this. If there was one thing he didn't want to do, then it was dig holes all day. And he had to do this for the next eighteen months, too. It was a living nightmare.

Simba chucked a pawful of dirt aside. He had amassed quite a medium-sized pile now – but his hole was far from finished. He was only about halfway there. *Three hours*, the poor cub thought to himself miserably. *I've been digging for three hours and I'm still not finished. Life sucks.*

Simba lay down on his side, pushing his cheek into the hard ground. Part of his fur was matted with dirt, causing him to look like he hadn't taken a bath in weeks. It certainly *felt* like that for him.

He dug his claws into the dirt again, scooping some of it up and chucking it on top of the pile. He worked in a steady rhythm. Pick up the dirt and put it on the pile. Repeat. Again and again and again until he collapsed from exhaustion out in the hot sun.

Right now, that moment was approaching. He just wanted to go to sleep. Close his eyes and drift away from the outside world, with nothing or nobody to bother him. If he was having problems with the first hole, then he dreaded to think of how hard it would get in the upcoming months.

If he were still alive, that is.

Hey, maybe it's not so bad, he thought optimistically. *Maybe only the first hole is the hardest. Maybe I'll get stronger, and within a few weeks I'll be digging without a problem!*

Such a hope soon died out for Simba. The prospect of that happening seemed far too unrealistic for him. He felt ready to fall unconscious – and he wasn't even finished. *I'm gonna die out here*, he thought hopelessly. "Die, die, die. Die just like all of the others."

He shot a worried glance at a hole a few feet away from him. That hole contained the skeletons of all the previous inmates at Camp Kazi. Each and every single one of them had died a slow and painful death – and that wasn't because of the digging they had been forced to do.

It was because of Maana. That scary, crazy, *evil* lion had something to hide. Simba knew that for certain. He wasn't just digging for the sake of it. That guy had his heart set on something. Something that was most likely buried under the ground. He didn't want to do the dirty work himself, so he was making unfortunate cubs like Simba do it for him.

Sighing, Simba used his claws to dig more dirt out, and then threw it on top of the pile by his hole. "I'm gonna be here for days," he said as he went about his work. "Weeks. Months. My whole life, probably. And then I *still* won't be finished. I'll end up looking like the skeletons in that hole over there."

The heat of the sun was being relentless on him today. His whole body was burning. *Frying*. "So hot..." he muttered, his eyelids suddenly feeling very heavy. "So, so hot..."

His eyes slowly closed, and Simba collapsed to the ground in his hole, unconscious. He was simply too tired to dig any longer.

And, just when he had picked the right time to show up, Maana stood over the edge of the hole, staring down at Simba. "Sleeping on the job, eh? I don't take very kindly to slacking off..."

AN: Oh, dear, oh, dear, oh, dear. Simba picked the wrong time to fall unconscious. I bet you can't wait to see the grisly punishment that awaits him. You sadists sicken me.

Chapter 7: Chapter 7: The Secret Below

AN: Will Simba escape Camp Kazi? You can only find out here. How about that? I'm exclusive!

LionKingFactsGuy2: Don't be so dismissive of Pori. There's more to her than meets the eye...

Simba Pridelands: Scar's voice? Interesting. He's supposed to be a bit like Mr Sir from *Holes*, but to each his own.

Chapter Seven: The Secret Below

"Miles," Haiba muttered as he walked. "I can't believe that you've made me walk *miles*. It's probably the worst thing that could have happened today. I've got this *really* bad ache in my left foreleg and it's starting to—"

"Haiba," Nala interrupted. "What did I tell you about not making me lose my mind every time you speak? It's not exactly *my* fault they stuck a camp for misguided cubs in the middle of a hot desert."

"Deserts," said Haiba. "We went to a desert yesterday. Isn't one of them enough? What about tomorrow? *Maybe* we should just take a trip to the *sun*."

"You sure you haven't changed at all today, Haiba?" Nala asked. "It's just that... Well, you know how Simba's parents are right now, don't you?"

"Of course I do," Haiba responded. "Crazy. They've completely lost it."

"Yeah," said Nala, nodding. "Even my mother noticed. Obviously what's affecting Simba's parents isn't affecting her."

"Affecting?" Haiba repeated. "What do you mean by that?"

"Isn't it obvious?" Nala replied. "Something's changed them. Either that or they've completely been replaced. Honestly, after all we've been through, is it really that surprising?"

"I guess not," Haiba said, glancing around. "Mermaids, psycho frogs, Death... Yeah, now a little parent swap doesn't seem so shocking."

"It's just hard to figure out, though," Nala said, straining to think. "Why would someone evil swap places with Simba's parents just to make his life so horrible? What would they get out of it?"

"Something like that doesn't really have much of an answer," Haiba responded. "So, do you have any kind of plan for breaking Simba out of Camp Crazy, or whatever the heck it's called?"

"It shouldn't be too hard," Nala told him, gesturing around the desolate land. "Look. All you can see is a bunch of holes in the ground. There's no one even guarding the area. Looks like all we have to do is find Simba and run away as fast as we can."

"And what if someone tries to stop us?" Haiba asked.

Nala shrugged. "I don't know, hit them or something. We can't just leave him there, Haiba. You know Simba. He's a sensitive guy. Putting him in one of those awful places just isn't good for his health. His mind could finally break."

Simba's mind had broken.

He couldn't stand any more of this. After being caught 'sleeping on the job' by Manna, his daily quota of holes had been raised to three a day. And if he weren't three holes in the ground by the end of the day, then Maana would make sure that Simba's neck would be snapped in half.

In short: it was dig holes or die.

"Holes," Simba muttered to himself, digging up the millionth pile of dirt with his claws. "Holes, holes, holes. All day. Every day. Digging. Digging for ever and ever. *For ever and ever...*"

He had gone numb. He wasn't feeling the exhaustion that plagued his body right now. His first hole had been completed. He had since started on his second hole, just staring down at his paws as they dug into the dirt, as if entranced by the ground. He barely had the energy to keep his eyes open – but he did it anyway.

He had to. His life depended on it.

"No!" Simba suddenly cried, collapsing onto his back. This was far too much for him to bear. "I've gotta get out of here!"

But how to escape? That was the problem. Even though there was no security, Simba felt like Maana was watching him. Watching him everywhere. If he so much as took a step away from his hole, Maana would swoop in from out of nowhere and tear his head off. He was sure of it.

He wanted to be rescued. Knowing Nala, she probably had a daring rescue plan in her head. Of course she'd rescue him. He'd rescued her, so it was only fair that she returned the favour.

She should be here any second now... Simba thought, sighing and closing his eyes. *Unless...*

Simba's eyes snapped open, and he immediately sat up. "Unless she's been changed, too," he finished aloud.

What if Nala had been changed – just like Simba's parents had? It was pretty obvious to the Prince of the Pride Lands that something had changed his parents significantly. The changes were minor at first, but now it was just ridiculous. Before long, they would be reduced to nothing but furious, ravaging creatures.

Maybe Nala had changed, too. She didn't seem too upset that Simba was going to be sent away to one of these horrible places. In fact, she was rather casual about it. He was beginning to suspect that Nala was also undergoing some kind of change. If she didn't come to rescue him, then it was almost certain that she was nothing more than a lying, good-for-nothing traitor—

"Simba!"

Maybe not, Simba thought with a smile, turning his head to the side.

Nala came running up to Simba, hugging him as tight as she could. "You're safe," she gasped, rocking him gently back and forth in her embrace. "All of your legs haven't fallen off."

Simba nuzzled Nala, happy that she had finally come to save him. "You have no idea how hard it's been," he told her. "And I've only been here for one day. I was supposed to stay at this camp for—"

"—Eighteen months?" Haiba finished for him, joining Nala by her side. "You know, it's taken us hours to get here. You're miles and miles away."

"I know," Simba replied. "My dad did drag me here, you know."

Nala tutted. "Look at you," she said, noticing all the dirt on Simba's fur. "What have they been making you do around here?"

"Holes," Simba muttered, sounding like he'd gone totally crazy. "Holes. Holes, holes, holes..."

Haiba smiled. "I've got it," he said. "It's something to do with holes."

"You *think*?" Nala retorted, glaring at Haiba.

"He makes me dig them all day," Simba moaned. He looked ready to drop down dead. "I haven't stopped. Not ever."

"Who?" Nala asked.

"Don't move," said a voice from behind the three. "Looks like I've found me some more evil, good-for-nothing cubs..."

"Wow..." Pori's eyes widened. "It really is quite beautiful. A lot better than that Outlands place."

Zazu had taken Pori to the top of a tree on the outskirts of the Pride Lands. The view was more or less sufficient enough to see most of the picturesque kingdom. "I had a suspicion that you would like it. After all, I know all the best viewpoints in the Pride Lands."

"You impress me, Zelda," said Pori. "You must work really, really hard at your job to know all about this *huge* place. How do you even manage it? I haven't held down a steady job in years – and the last one involved hitting myself on the head for food. My family tell me that it's affected my mind somehow."

"I never would have guessed," replied Zazu. "I am to presume that you'll be staying here for quite some time."

"Of course I'm staying, Zoltar," Pori said. "How could I not? This place is so amazing. It's like... Just, wow. It's great."

"Not for me," Zazu mumbled, staring sadly down at the ground. "I lost my job because of the King's inconsiderate personality. He's not the lion I once knew."

"That's a shame, Zordon. But don't worry. You don't need any old royal family to keep you company. You've got me as your friend now!" Pori exclaimed happily, hugging Zazu close to her.

"Yes," said Zazu. "Yes, I suppose that's... adequate."

The former royal advisor had a feeling that the next few weeks were sure to be eventful...

Maana eyed the three cubs with narrowed eyes. "Great," he said. "Two new troublemakers to dig for me."

"We aren't doing anything!" Nala said defiantly, not intimidated in the slightest by this big, burly lion. "You can't just keep Simba here and force him to dig all day!"

"Oh, yes I can," said Manna. "There's only one law around here – and that's *me*. You will all do as I say."

"Because you don't want to dig yourself?" Simba finally said, lifting his head to look at Maana. "I mean, I kinda figured that out a while back. We *are* digging for something, aren't we?"

"You got that damn right," was Maana's reply. "You're digging to build some character."

"What?" Haiba couldn't help but laugh. "That's just silly. Who digs to build character? That doesn't improve your personality at all. Brainwashing or hypnosis does – but rarely manual labour."

"Come on," Simba urged, taking a step towards his camp counsellor. "You can tell us. What are you *really* digging for?"

Maana frowned. "Nothing that you'd be interested in."

"Something evil, of course," Nala presumed. "Seems likely for a creepy guy such as yourself."

Maana growled. "Why, you little—" He got ready to strike Nala, but then hesitated. "All right. You want to know what I'm looking for? I'll tell ya. Not like you're gonna know what it is. It's a diamond. They call it a Uchoyo Diamond."

"Oh, boy..." Nala said, a worried look crossing her face. "Not a Uchoyo Diamond."

"That's not good," Haiba said, shaking his head. "That's not good at all."

"One of my old friends buried it here," Maana told them. "I've been digging for years and years. I need to find it. I need that power!"

"So that's why you set up Camp Kazi," Simba concluded. "You didn't want to waste your life digging, so you got other people to do it for you – until one of them found the Uchoyo Diamond."

"How do you even know what it is?" Maana demanded.

"What, you think there's only one?" said Haiba. "Boy, you have a lot to learn. You see, we've had a run-in with a Uchoyo Diamond ourselves."

"And we're definitely not gonna let *you* get your paws on one," Nala said. "So you might as well give up now."

Maana let out a long laugh, backing away. "Oh, that's funny. You think two cubs like you are gonna stop me? You're no match! You're gonna dig all day! Dig, dig, dig until you can barely lift your legs! And then you'll keep digging!"

He laughed evilly, before accidentally tripping backwards into one of the holes – the one that was filled with all of the skeletons.

Simba, Nala and Haiba raced over to the edge of the hole, staring down. Maana tried to escape from it, but then something truly amazing – and rather horrific – happened.

The skeletons began to move. They grabbed Maana by the legs, dragging him down into the hole. It was clearly much deeper than all of the others – and there were a lot more skeletons than Simba first thought.

Maana tried to cling on to the inside wall of the hole, but couldn't get a decent grip. The skeletons dragged him down. Down, down, down into the darkness...

Maana's screams died out – and so did the skeletons. All of them were gone.

Nala was speechless. "Now, that right there," she said, pointing at the hole. "That was messed up."

When Simba, Nala and Haiba arrived back at the Pride Lands, Mufasa and Sarabi were incredibly shocked.

"Simba?" Mufasa gasped, standing in the den entrance. "How did you escape Camp Kazi?"

"Because I have friends that are better than you!" Simba spat angrily. "As opposed to *you* – who just want to send me away – they actually cared and got me out of that horrible camp!"

Not really sure of what to say, the King and Queen of the Pride Lands glanced at each other worriedly.

"Uh..." Mufasa nervously smiled at his son. "Well done, Simba. You... passed the... test."

"Huh?"

"It was a... test," Mufasa said, nodding at Simba. "To make sure that you are... uh, skilled enough to become the future King. You have done well, son."

"We're very proud of you," Sarabi added.

Simba narrowed his eyes in suspicion. "Hmm..." Deciding not to elaborate further on this, he pretended to be happy. "Oh. Okay, then. Thanks!"

With that, he dashed inside the den. Nala was quick to speak to him. "Okay, you didn't seriously believe them, did you?"

"Yeah," Haiba agreed, nodding. "The King was just lying to your face."

"I know," Simba replied. "There's something weird going on here. And I've got to find out what it is – *tonight*."

"*Simba!*" bellowed a voice from outside the den.

Simba, Nala and Haiba all watched as an elegant looking cub stepped inside the den. "I have a challenge for you!" he said.

Simba frowned. "Just as soon as I've taken care of this."

The End

AN: Cliffhanger! Yeah, the first three stories of this series all take place one after the other. I'm really looking forward to this next one. I'm aware that there are still some questions left unanswered. What happened to Mufasa and Sarabi? Why did the skeletons come back to life? Why is there an Uchoyo Diamond buried underneath the ground? I'm afraid these questions will have to be resolved at another time.

NEXT TIME: A mad challenge results in Simba, Nala and Haiba being chased across the land by a psychotic, menacing villain – known only as the Interceptor...